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HERRO MUSTAFA IN P

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SUBJECT: OIC PLANS TO OPEN OFFICE IN BAGHDAD

Classified By: Acting Consul General CB Toney for Reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) In an April 29 meeting with Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) Director General for Political Affairs Mahdy Fathallah, he elaborated on OIC plans to open an office in Baghdad. The OIC hopes to send soon Ambassador Hamed Mohammad Altani to run a three-person shop (the Ambassador and two locally employed staff) at an office near the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (NOTE: According to Fathallah, Altani is a prominent Sudanese diplomat, having had positions as Ambassador to Iran (2001 - 2005) and Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson. END NOTE.).

¶2. (C) While Fathallah could not say when Ambassador Altani would depart for Baghdad, he was able to speak on the goals of the OIC presence in Iraq. The more immediate goal is to prepare for the "technical" visit of representatives from the OIC's 21 agencies, including the Islamic Development Bank, to assess how the Organization can best assist in reconstruction. Another goal, he added, was to build on the OIC's 2006 Mecca Declaration Initiative to facilitate reconciliation between Shia and Sunni leaders.

¶3. (C) In response to why the OIC has chosen to open an office now, Fathallah stated that on his April trip to Baghdad (from which he accompanied Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki in his plane to the April 22 Conference of the Neighboring Countries of Iraq), he observed two major changes. He said he noticed immediately an improved security environment as well as a desire to cooperate between the Shia and Sunni leaders. Nevertheless, he admitted he did not anticipate OIC member state governments to follow suit "because they have their own criteria for opening an Embassy."
TONEY